

2021

Chapter 5

Using Assessment to Prompt Innovation

Roberta D. Kjesrud, *Western Washington University*



Image by [Wynn Pointaux](#) from [Pixabay](#)

About the Author

Roberta was a peer tutor, a staff supervisor, and a director at Western Washington University's Writing Center between 1988-2015. In 2015, she became the Director of Writing for Western Libraries' Hacherl Research & Writing Studio. The editors welcome communication about this piece through the Studio's email: rws@wwu.edu.

RECOMMENDED CITATION, APA 7TH ED

Kjesrud, R. D. (2021). Using assessment to prompt innovation. In R. D. Kjesrud, P. Hemsley, S. Jensen, & E. Winningham (Eds.), *Learning enhanced: Studio practices for engaged inclusivity* (pp. 5.1 – 5.35). Western Libraries CEDAR. https://cedar.wwu.edu/learning_enhanced/8

This book is brought to you for free and open access by the Books and Monographs at Western CEDAR. It was accepted for inclusion in *Learning Enhanced: Studio Practices for Engaged Inclusivity* by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

Abstract

In response to the accountability mandate in higher education institutions (HEIs), academic support program leaders often prioritize evaluation initiatives that mirror this larger proof-of-value agenda. While such summative evaluation should be part of our professional priorities, this proof-focused attention often supplants an equity-minded assessment agenda: *improving learning*. Improving requires us to understand more deeply exactly what students do and don't learn through our programs' teaching and learning initiatives. In shortchanging these inquiry-focused initiatives to improve our pedagogies and practices, our home disciplines miss identifying connections between practices and learning and overlook gaps between what students need and what they get. In this chapter, I parse evaluation and assessment, review how little our literature correlates pedagogies with learning, and discuss the pedagogical fossilization that can result when practitioners don't assess to improve. To illuminate the connection between assessment and innovation, I summarize both heartening and challenging findings from the Hacherl Studio's assessment of three outcomes: inquiry, collaboration, and agency. Finally, I suggest principles for implementing bite-sized assessment projects building toward a comprehensive assessment portfolio that both benchmarks learning and inspires innovation.

Keywords: Improving learning, assessing student learning, pedagogies, learning needs, pedagogical innovation, program effectiveness

As a fresh-faced graduate researcher years ago, I designed a project I secretly hoped would prove that writing center consultations helped students improve their writing more than teachers' written feedback. I divided student participants from a writing intensive computer science course into two groups; half received at least three written responses from the instructor and half consulted three times with a consistent writing center peer tutor. I collected pre-/post-writing samples which were holistically rated for quality, I collected transcripts of both teacher feedback and writing center dialogues, and for a subset of participants, I did a line study of revisions correlated to feedback. Results? Little of note. Teacher feedback correlated with no improvements in final drafts, whereas writing center dialogues correlated with minor improvements (Buck, 1994). Sadly, my big proof failed the significance test. Apparently, I'm in good company. Proof-of-learning assessments like mine often fail to demonstrate a significant correlation (let alone causation) between an intervention and significant writing improvement. I had discovered what writing center assessment scholar Casey Jones calls a "blind alley" (2001, p. 10).

After a significant period of post-assessment sulking, I decided I needed a different approach. What if I asked different kinds of questions: What kinds of interventions and practices most correlate with increased learning? What gaps in learning do I notice, and what kinds of new interventions might fill those gaps? Note the shift from my original proof-oriented questions to these inquiry-based ones. Instead of starting from a place of trying to prove writing centers work, I started from a new assumption: like all teaching, writing centers most likely sometimes work and sometimes don't. When they do work, it's not because there's peculiar magic about writing centers (or is there?) but because there's some complex alchemy between the

practitioner, their pedagogical practices, and students' felt needs. When writing centers don't work, well now, maybe that's even more interesting than when they do. What if I could design an assessment project that would help me correlate practices with outcomes, and what if those correlations helped me find new practices to address learning gaps? Hmmmm, intriguing.

It turns out I'm not unique in asking my initial proof-oriented questions. Fueled by demands for accountability by stakeholders like students, parents, and accrediting bodies, HEIs must demonstrate value, which they do by correlating high impact practices with outcomes like retention and other indirect measures of learning. Strongly affected by this accountability climate over the last two decades, academic support programs like libraries and writing centers, have been searching for proof of their effectiveness in two main ways: proof of value and proof of learning. Value proofs report usage statistics, user satisfaction, and return on investment measures using performance indicators like achievement and retention.¹ Learning proofs focus on direct measures of literacy improvement², but this work remains fraught with method and significance challenges. Methodologically, support professionals seldom have direct access to students' products the way classroom faculty do, so studies of this kind seem logistically impossible. Even with a practical method, findings often disappoint because they reveal weak or insignificant correlations rather than the robust proof we crave (Jones, 2001; Oakleaf & Kyrillidou, 2016). To overcome these barriers, support professionals often focus on indirect measures such as process strategies (Thompson,

¹ In the library world, some examples include *College & Research Libraries*, Volume 81/3, April 2020, a themed issue devoted to correlating library use with student success. (See also Cox & Jantti, 2012; Gilchrist & Oakleaf, 2012; Oakleaf, 2012; Stone et al., 2011; Stone & Ramsden, 2013.)

² In the writing center world, see a sampling of literature reviews (Jones, 2001; Pleasant et al., 2016; Schendel & Macauley, 2012; Thompson, 2006).

2006), anxiety reduction/motivation (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2013), procrastination behaviors (Young & Fritzsche, 2002), and self-efficacy (Schmidt & Alexander, 2012) to name a few. These are all admirable efforts that should continue fulfilling the purposes of assessment: to make effectiveness visible, to enhance research, to increase reflective practice, and to fulfill our professional responsibilities (Thompson, 2006). So far so good.

But there's a problem with the assess-to-prove paradigm that dominates our fields: there's simply too little scholarly curiosity invested in improving learning. Proof measures fulfill our obligations for accountability, and I like accountability, I do. But when that's our sole focus, we end up expending our professional energies defending our programs rather than improving them, which in turn reifies rather than challenges embedded inequities. To distinguish between *evaluation* and *assessment*, I offer the following distinctions³. Evaluation is institution- or program-oriented and features summative judgments on the effectiveness of said institution or program. In other words, evaluation initiatives are motivated by accountability and proof. Assessment, on the other hand, is learner/learning oriented and features observations about what students across identities do and don't learn and how successes and gaps inform innovation for improving teaching and learning (Dugan & Hernon, 2002; Frye, n.d.). In other words, assessment initiatives are motivated by curiosity and improvement. In short, assessment is "an iterative process for gathering, interpreting, and applying outcomes data from courses, programs, or entire curricula to improve program

³ Some claim evaluation as outward-facing and assessment as inward-facing. However, this binary doesn't hold. Accrediting bodies want to see improvement in learning as do campus stakeholders. Therefore, evaluation and assessment are both inward and outward facing.

effectiveness, particularly as measured by student learning outcomes” (Frye, n.d.). To reiterate: both evaluation and assessment are essential, but this chapter forwards an inquiry-based assessment agenda.

Since scholars in our home disciplines often conflate accountability with assessment, our professionals show a distressing tendency to value proving the status quo over improving it (Dugan & Hernon, 2002). Maybe it makes sense: skeptics often fail to recognize our fields as real disciplines and important sites for learning. Maybe it’s this Velveteen Rabbit Syndrome that keeps us from critically examining our lore-based practices, identifying outcomes’ gaps, and piloting innovation in a continuous improvement cycle. But without assessment, we lack information to explain our own teaching practices and to develop new equity practices. We may intuitively sense the limited effectiveness of practices like bibliographic instruction one-shots (LIS) and non-directive consulting (WCS), but we lack information to help us innovate. I argue that it is time for our programs to identify gaps in our lore-based pedagogies, to innovate practices that address those gaps, and to create recursive, incremental plans to assess - innovate - assess in pursuit of program improvements, equity-based practices, and increased learning. Although it’s not my purpose to linger on accountability in this chapter, I’ll overview accountability trends to show how they overshadow assessment efforts in our home disciplines. As an example of the kind of inquiry-based assessment I’m suggesting, I’ll summarize findings from our Studio’s assessments, and finally, I’ll extract principles from those incremental projects to guide academic support programs in creating do-able, innovation-oriented assessments that lead to engaged inclusivity.

The Proof Agenda in HEIs

Unfortunately for our industry, we live in times of unprecedented public skepticism about the overall value of higher education. Research focusing on that value have reported some gloomy results. For instance in *Academically Adrift*, Arum and Roksa (2011), implemented several measures of learning including the *Collegiate Learning Assessment* and concluded that nearly half of more than 2,300 undergraduates at 24 institutions demonstrated no significant improvements in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing over their first two years of college. While Arum and Roska's research has been justifiably criticized (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010; Farkas, 2011; Schendel & Macauley, 2012), their findings published for a general audience spurred parents, prospective students, funders, and accreditors to question whether higher education actually delivers on the value it promises.

Sowing doubt about value comes as a most inopportune time for HEIs because they are increasingly competing for a smaller college age demographic at the same time public funding is shriveling. Both challenges feed an accountability movement that compels HEIs to prove value, and most choose key performance indicators (KPIs) as the outcomes⁴ to use in allowing consumers to comparison-shop. For instance, according to the *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System* (IPEDS), the national aggregate six-year graduation rate is 62% and retention rate is 81% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020); locally, my university's *Key Performance Dashboard* lists aggregated graduation and retention at 67.9% and 82% respectively (Western Washington University Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2019a), indicating to

⁴ Note that *student outcomes* are not the same as *learning outcomes*. Student outcomes, or key performance indicators, prove that the institution itself is successful in delivering on its promises to students. KPIs imply learning, but they don't directly measure it.

prospective students and legislators that Western is more effective than average. Both the National Center for Educational Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education offer consumers college comparison tools such as *College Navigator* and *College Scorecard*.

But KPIs only reveal an institution's effectiveness within the industry as a whole (Dugan & Hernon, 2002); they do not reveal what students actually learn (Oakleaf & Kyrillidou, 2016). For that we need direct or indirect assessments of learning, sometimes called student learning outcomes or SLOs. If legislatures drive accountability, accreditors drive assessment because they demand proof of continuous improvement and of learning, generally both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (Nusche, 2008). But because there are seven regional accrediting bodies each with different benchmarks, the national assessment scene is dizzyingly complex with little consensus on how institutions should demonstrate this learning. Nevertheless, there are trends. At the national level, both for-profit and not-for-profit enterprises provide assessment tools and resources. For-profit companies market standardized measures of academic achievement in problem-solving, critical thinking, reading, writing, essay writing, and mathematics; institutions use these to demonstrate value-added from their general education requirements. For instance, the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE), is a subscription-type exit survey designed to reveal best practices for student engagement. Both Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) offer resources for HEIs to design local assessments; these are more often aimed at practitioners assessing the outcomes of curricula, particularly in majors. LEAP, for instance, offers *Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education* (VALUE) rubrics as assessment

models, and NILOA offers support for developing a culture of assessment among faculty, staff, and administrators. If you've stuck with me through this alphabet soup, I admire you. (For those who wish to track any of these resources, see Appendix A, pp. 34-25.) For now, know that it's less important to track the soup, but it's critical to glean that, for HEIs and their accreditors, evidence of learning matters. A lot.

The Proof Agenda in Academic Support Programs

Influenced by this national context, support programs have developed their own proof-driven agendas. Libraries have arguably done more to identify value, perhaps because IPEDS includes library metrics or perhaps because libraries are high profile enough to catch the attention of national assessment experts like George Kuh and Robert Gonyea (2015). In LIS scholarship, accountability themes prevail, including user satisfaction, bean counting, and KPI learning surrogates. Influenced by an historical service model, much library scholarship features user satisfaction data (Dugan & Hernon, 2002), which is also a strong focus in WCS (Schendel & Macauley, 2012). We all love to report ubiquitously high satisfaction rates on our annual reports. But we all love our numbers, too, so bean-counting, that is, tracking inputs and outputs as measures of program efficiency (Dugan & Hernon, 2002) is another strong accountability theme in LIS and WCS. But as prominent WCS assessment scholar Neal Lerner recommends, we should “move away from positioning writing center directors as little more than the ticket tearers at the writing center turnstiles” (2001, p. 1). Inputs include resources offered (volumes in collections, hours open, consulting hours offered) and outputs include resources used (volumes circulated, gate counts, consulting hours filled). National data on library inputs/outputs are tracked regularly in IPEDS and through ACRL, while national data on writing center inputs/outputs are partially

tracked through the *National Census of Writing* (Gladstein & Fralix, 2017) and the *Writing Centers Research Project* (Purdue Writing Lab, n.d.).

While these accountability measures support program leaders in proving a return on investment (ROI) to funders, leaders have more recently turned to proving value using the same KPI learning surrogates valued in our industry. Megan Oakleaf, a leading LIS assessment scholar who works closely with the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), has published much prominent work encouraging correlating library use with achievement, retention, and graduation rates (Gilchrist & Oakleaf, 2012; Oakleaf, 2010, 2012; Oakleaf & Kyrillidou, 2016). Some assessment volumes⁵ offer summative proof of value using grades and retention (Bowles-Terry, 2012; Cox & Jantti, 2012; Grillo & Leist, 2013; Soria et al., 2013; Stone & Ramsden, 2013; Wurtz, 2015; Yook, 2013), but only a few focus on student learning (Sobel & Sugimoto, 2012) or offer a mixed approach including both (Gilchrist & Oakleaf, 2012). Even the mixed approach disproportionately emphasizes evaluation: the motivation is to prove that by interacting with libraries, students are more likely to achieve and succeed. The most recent two-volume publication by ACRL amply demonstrates this emphasis: *Academic Libraries and the Academy: Strategies and Approaches to Demonstrate Your Value, Impact, and Return on Investment* (Nadir & Scheurer, 2018). As further evidence, ACRL's website catalogs over ten resources on assessment, nearly all focused on proving.

Although assessment to improve is not prominent in our literature, some LIS scholars warn that providing satisfaction, usage, ROI, and even KPI outcomes doesn't exempt libraries from assessing student learning as required by accreditors (Dugan &

⁵ Note that LIS glosses this scholarship as *assessment*; sadly, the LIS field rarely distinguishes assessment from evaluation. By the definitions in this chapter, the bulk of this work is *evaluation*—proof of value.

Hernon, 2002; Hernon & Dugan, 2001). Seeing the trend in libraries to be satisfied with KPIs, Oakleaf along with Kyrillidou (2016) echo Dugan and Hernon's concern. But despite growing recognition libraries' white supremacy pedagogies (see for example Hathcock, 2015), even these perturbed scholars fail to mention the role of assessment in improving teaching and learning. One notable exception in LIS scholarship concerns user assessments of learning spaces; in fact, the ACRL regularly updates a bibliography of user studies (Kidwell, 2019). While built campus environments predominately cater to what works for the institution (see Chapter 4), libraries uniquely seek student input and act on it to improve learning spaces.

Like libraries, WCS also emphasizes a proof agenda. Neal Lerner, in "Writing Center Assessment: Searching for 'Proof' of Our Effectiveness," pans two notable correlational studies (including his own) as unfortunate but inadvertent models of "how to lie with statistics" (2003, p. 61), but he still recommends measures for proving, including collecting pre-/post-consultation drafts looking for evidence of writing improvement (2003, p. 70). In the only assessment-themed volume in WCS, Schendel and Macauley (2012) present a thorough review of LIS-parallel assessment literature featuring measures like satisfaction, counts, inputs/outputs, ROI, and institutional KPIs. In addition to proving program effectiveness, WCS scholarship also attempts to prove learning through direct measures of writing improvement and indirect measures of non-cognitive gains like self-efficacy, lower anxiety, and reduced procrastination. Schendel and Macauley mention the relative dearth of assessments that examine particular practices or that pursue improvement as a goal. In a briefer literature review organized by what motivates assessment, Miriam Gofine (2012) notes the same dearth. She identifies five prevalent assessment motives: 1) demonstrate ROI; 2) link to broader

institutional efforts; 3) fulfill internal program needs; 4) prove correlation to student success; and 5) improve writing center teaching—but, sadly, Gofine found just one article with an improvement emphasis (2012, pp. 40–41). All professionals seem to want to do these days is prove, prove, prove.

Of course, the distinction between evaluating to prove and assessing to improve can be a murky one; sometimes (hopefully often) proving leads to improving. In a notable blended effort, ACRL partnered with NILOA to author an occasional paper detailing results from a collaborative assessment project called *Assessment in Action* (Malenfant & Brown, 2017). At each participating HEI, librarians headed campus teams comprising constituents from across roles, including faculty, student affairs, administrators⁶. Although teams found encouraging evidence of the library's relationship to student learning, the *Assessment in Action* project led to an unanticipated improvement: each participating HEI built a sustainable, cross-silo culture of assessment (Malenfant & Brown, 2017, pp. 16–18). Similarly, in the *Academic Library Impact: Improving Practice and Essential Areas to Research*, researchers pursued a proof-of-value agenda but ended up issuing an urgent call for LIS scholars to put improvement on the profession's research agenda (Connaway et al., 2017). If and only if participating scholars cultivate an inquiry stance, proving can lead to improving.

The Improvement Agenda in Teaching and Learning

As noted, assessing learning in academic support programs creates evidentiary challenges. We have no grades, no access to students' products, and little ability to measure change over time. Further, many scholars note professionals in our home

⁶ Tragically, they omitted students, an inherent equity problem.

disciplines lack expertise in designing and implementing projects that measure student learning (Gofine, 2012; Lerner, 2001, 2003; Oakleaf, 2010; Schendel & Macauley, 2012; Sobel & Sugimoto, 2012). The answer is not to abandon accountability but rather to add curiosity about how students across identities experience our practices. Far too little assessment energy focuses on students, on what they learn, on what practices suit them best and why⁷. Even fewer assessment efforts feature students as co-inquirers, not mere subjects. Along with NILOA and several of the initiatives outlined in Appendix A, the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) promotes assessment and research⁸ motivated solely by curiosity about promising pedagogies and improving teaching and learning; furthermore, it invites students as co-inquirers. Imagine what the opportunities for improving our pedagogies if we stay curious and include students across identities in inquiry-based assessments.

If curiosity alone isn't enough to drive inquiry-based assessment, HEI accrediting bodies demand coordinated assessment efforts for the improvement of learning. In response to accreditation standards, Western Washington University requires that each academic department/unit file a recursive assessment plan: assess learning one year and implement improvements the next. While this kind of recursive assess-improve cycle is scarce in academic support unit scholarship, departments subject to more scrutiny from both HEI and professional association accreditors offer more models. For instance, the Planning Accreditation Board, the accrediting body for planning programs,

⁷ As the *Assessment in Action* project (Malenfant & Brown, 2017) demonstrates, even fewer assessment efforts include students as co-inquirers rather than as mere subjects.

⁸ Research has a role in both assessment and evaluation, but it is not essential to either. One can evaluate and assess without research. Assessment “strives to know...what is” and then uses that information to change the status quo; in contrast, research is designed to test hypotheses (Keeling, et al, 2008, p. 28, as cited in Oakleaf, 2010). Assessment focuses on observations of change; research is concerned with the degree of correlation or causation among variables (Keeling, et al., 2008, p. 35, as cited in Oakleaf, 2010).

not only suggests specific learning outcomes, it also suggests specific pedagogical practices to achieve those outcomes. One mandated pedagogy is especially relevant to our theme: 84% of all planning programs in the U.S. require their students to earn studio credits featuring studio-based learning pedagogies (Long, 2012; Németh & Long, 2012). This disciplinary accreditation board's recommendations led to the faculty adopting SBL and further prompted departmental plans for assessing and improving cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes (Németh & Long, 2012; Nusche, 2008). Similarly, the Association for the Study of Medical Education (Swanwick, 2010) supports medical programs in all aspects of assessment right down to pedagogical methods; for instance, they study what students learn from simulations, problem-based learning, work-based learning, small group collaborations, and coaching/mentoring. In fact, many disciplines assess pedagogical practices and how they affect student expertise. Nursing education assesses group learning (Ladouceur et al., 2004) as does medicine (Pal et al., 2012). Design, architecture, computer science, planning, and composition assess studio-based learning pedagogies (Crowther, 2013; Németh & Long, 2012; Schön, 1985; Silva et al., 2017). While far from exhaustive, these initiatives serve as models for LIS, WS, and WCS scholars—we too can develop practical plans to assess pedagogical practices and improve learning.

Assessing Innovation in the Research & Writing Studio

When the Hacherl Studio was created in 2015, we found ourselves with an unusual assessment/evaluation opportunity, that is, to compare findings from separate units with joint efforts. Prior to merging, both the Writing Center and Research Consultation separately pursued different evaluation and assessment efforts, but both featured more bean-counting than anything else. In terms of improving, the Writing

Center had begun identifying student learning from pilot initiatives, but it's fair to say that neither program implemented robust assessments of learning. Although that gap means we lack a baseline to compare innovative pedagogies against traditional ones, we merged because we believed conceptually that the envisioned Studio aligned more tightly with high impact practices that optimize learning (Kuh et al., 2015). Of course, the conceptual had to be made concrete. Together with other program leaders in Western Libraries' Learning Commons, the Head of Research Consultation and the Writing Center Director began negotiating shared learning aspirations aligned with our larger umbrella—the University and the Libraries' Teaching & Learning Division. Collectively, we rallied around growing inquiry, collaboration, and agency⁹. Now six years post merger, our assessment projects are still a work in progress, but they show emerging evidence that our new pedagogies are accomplishing the hoped-for learning. More importantly this assessment work also offers exciting insights on ways we can keep improving our practices.

Inquiry

Pre-Studio, the Writing Center specifically articulated growing inquiry as an aspiration for visitors. To that end, we offered classroom-based writing workshops for developing and refining inquiry questions. The Studio continues to offer workshops with that same emphasis, but the curriculum now follows our integrated literacies signature pedagogy, meaning facilitators seamlessly address research, reading, and writing. As a practitioner, I reflectively noticed benefits to this integrated approach. In writing-only workshops, I was frequently perturbed when so many students resisted committing to a

⁹ Western Libraries' Teaching and Learning Division (and the Studio) added an outcome, *evaluate/challenge inequity*, that is still too new to assess.

topic interest for fear of finding too many or too few sources. Their wait-and-see approach meant that our inquiry question refining strategies fell flat. In the integrated literacies workshops, students have an opportunity to test their inquiry questions using research and reading strategies on the spot, and I noticed this inclusion enabled students to make more progress in refining their inquiry questions before workshops concluded. Facilitator reflection in our community of practice affirmed my suspicions and confirmed a continuing integrated literacies approach to teaching inquiry.

It was time to test these suspicions formally after several terms of collaborating with Dr. Brian Bowe in incorporating the integrated workshop series into his capstone journalism course. We both observed that final thesis statements simply weren't as sophisticated as we hoped. To scaffold those more effectively, we decided to pilot and assess some pedagogical innovations. One term we piloted a method for assessing these practices, and the following two terms we conducted IRB-approved outcomes research examining the growth of inquiry after implementing two interventions. In addition to one standard workshop practice, work time for students to use a collaborative draft - question - revise strategy on their inquiry questions, we added two elements: use the same strategy in developing/refining a working thesis and add medium-stakes accountability. Specifically, our research required recursivity by prompting a total of six iterations of both inquiry questions and working thesis statements at the beginning and end of three 90-minute workshops. And we added medium-stakes accountability by asking students to turn in their iterations for points. After two terms, all iterations, including the final thesis statements, were blinded and holistically rated against the workshop criteria for inquiry/thesis: focus, specificity, and complexity. Data showed

that the last question/thesis iteration scored 21% higher than earlier ones¹⁰. Of course, these results are merely suggestive and require follow-up, but it appears that both iteration and accountability helped students deepen and focus inquiry (Bowe et al., 2020, p. 6).

These findings also suggest pedagogical improvements for the Studio and the Journalism Department. In the Studio, both in our workshops and our individual coaching, we can increase the stickiness of writing strategies and deep thinking if we add medium-stakes accountability. Of course, we can't assign points or award grades, but practitioners can easily say, "When I get back, I'd like to see a new version of this question." We can also request more frequent iterations of inquiry questions by saying "How about drafting five crummy thesis statements to see what emerges?" For the Journalism Department, Dr. Bowe noted that the affective and cognitive load of writing in the entirely unfamiliar, formal literature review genre seemed to stifle true inquiry. To eliminate these distractors, Dr. Bowe led the department to adopt significant curricular and assignment improvements that have now been implemented across every section of the department's capstone course¹¹.

Collaboration

While collaborative learning theory undergirds instruction in both libraries and writing centers, neither of our separate units pursued learning goals that valued learning in community. The boundaryless Studio space made visible the collaborative learning we were missing the opportunity (and practices) to support. For instance, in

¹⁰ Other notable findings include the tendency to backslide; that is, students' questions/thesis statements often got worse before they got better (see Bowe et al., 2020 for details).

¹¹ For more findings on the value of medium-stakes accountability and frequent iterations, on moving away from traditional literature review assignments, and on scaling expectations for an undergraduate theory/writing course, see Bowe et al. (2020).

2019 the Studio hosted nearly 9000 groups of primarily three types: friend groups (different classes, different assignments), classmate groups (same assignment, individual products), and project groups (same assignment, joint product). Students often work long hours in the Studio space, sometimes with support from tutors but also with support from each other. This learning community ethos allows us to intentionally coach students in collaboration strategies; however, we quickly learned our staff were poorly equipped for this coaching, and traditional pedagogies in our home disciplines offered little innovative guidance. We simply lacked practices altogether.

Since our first collaboration-focused assessment project couldn't connect practices to outcomes, a team of undergraduate Studio Assistants focused entirely on identifying gaps. Thalmann et al. (2016) held focus sessions with project groups and with tutors to illuminate unmet group needs and to unpack tutors' reluctance to engage groups. In terms of student needs, Thalmann et al.'s data exposed three main needs around the collaborative process: coordinating group logistics, negotiating relational conflict, and connecting multiple voices seamlessly. Informants complained that tutors offered few strategies for these needs, noting that the strategies they did offer were tailored to individual rather than collective writing. Tutor informants confessed to avoiding group coaching as much as possible because they sensed one-to-one strategies were inadequate, so to equip tutors with additional practices, leaders developed collaboration strategies and professional development materials. This needs assessment project helped us to identify gaps and improvements to address them, including developing a curriculum for staff development and authoring a series of online learning

objects¹² for students undertaking group work. Now that faculty increasingly embed Studio visits for their group assignments, we can design a new assessment to connect this curriculum to learning.

Agency

Although agency¹³ was an explicit outcome for our former writing center, many traditional pedagogies didn't scaffold it adequately. For instance, traditional writing center practice treated writing as a stand-alone literacy; we failed to recognize how developing agency around research and reading impacted writers and their writing. Also, our program featured two standard tutor practices—making suggestions and giving reader responses—but we seldom scaffolded transferable strategies that visitors could use both immediately and in future work. While agency is tricky to measure, by studying an IRB-approved corpus of transcripts contrasting traditional consultations with SBL micro-consultations, we have preliminary evidence suggesting that studio-based learning (SBL) pedagogies do prompt growth in agency.

Consider the following transcript excerpt. In SBL fashion, the Studio Assistant (SA) previously spent 15 minutes with the visitor, modeling a process strategy (*I do*) and practicing it together (*We do*). This excerpt picks up as the SA re-engages the visitor (V) after leaving them for 15 minutes to work on their own (*You do*).

SA: So how did that Sticky Note Strategy work for you?

V: Good. Actually, I figured something out about my paper and found a good transition. The paragraph that she [instructor] cut out is actually a good

¹² The Studio's four-part [online learning object video series](#) supports groups in developing a main idea, organizing group process, writing a unified product, and editing/proofreading (Slee & Winningham, 2019).

¹³ Note that *agency* is often called *self-efficacy* in writing center scholarship (Schmidt & Alexander, 2012) and *self-regulated learning* (SRL) in educational psychology (Efklides, 2011).

transition into paragraph 4 about Z, and I think it defines more of X, so it's kind of a more natural fit, which I hadn't seen before.

SA: Great! Did you find any other patterns?

V: Paragraph 2 and 3 transition into each other fairly well, and I think that's probably because I wrote them at the same time. 4 and 5 are about Z, so what I'm realizing is that my paper is just divided into topics X and Z right now.

SA: So you feel like X and Z are the most important parts of your paper right now?

V: Yeah, and I think I should probably add more. So I found this study about Y, which talks about something that leads up to Z. So I was thinking I'd drop that in there, and then say "However" because this leads to Z.

—Glossed transcript from a return visit micro-consultation

Admittedly cherry-picked, this dialogue is simply bursting with the visitor's new conceptual understandings prompted by putting into practice the scaffolded strategy during work time. By no means unique among micro-consulting transcripts, our research team comprising undergraduates and professionals saw few parallels in our corpus of traditional consultation transcripts. In the studio-based corpus, we identified two main types of consultations—those focused on scaffolding cognitive growth (these feature more dialogue) and those focused on scaffolding processual growth (these feature more work time). These data led us to appreciate that SBL provides more scaffolding for learning *how* than traditional dialogic pedagogies, and yet the sample transcript intriguingly reveals that work time scaffolds far more growth more in cognition than we expected. (See [Chapter 2](#) for more on matching scaffolds to outcomes.) Clearly, we still have much to learn from our larger data sets, but early analysis has already revealed the powerful ways micro-consulting sets visitors up to resolve many of their own dilemmas during work time. Remaining dilemmas simply

provide a starting point for the next micro-consult. In general, our corpus reveals impressive evidence that, as we equip visitors with new strategies, they begin to exercise often-masterful control of their revising strategies and rhetorical decision-making.

But this assessment corpus also revealed areas for us to improve. For instance, although metacognition plays a key role in developing agency (Ambrose et al., 2010) and our staff development theoretically equipped Studio Assistants to scaffold *going meta*¹⁴, we noted that our staff prompted far fewer metacognitive moves than we were expecting. In fact, transcripts revealed visitors initiated going meta almost twice as often as our staff did. While we were very happy to see visitors exhibiting these habits of mind (agency!), we also want staff to scaffold going meta when visitors aren't making those moves. We significantly revised our staff education curriculum, so in our next round of assessing the agency outcome, we can evaluate our new practices and augment them further if needed.

Principles for Developing Assessment Plans

While the preceding projects are mere examples of the ways the Hacherl Studio has sought to understand student learning and close the loop to improve it, the best assessments are always locally tailored. Nevertheless, these local projects can be mined for principles that demonstrate learning, uncover gaps in learning, and suggest improved practices.

1. Articulate your program's goals for student learning.

For our Studio, articulating shared learning goals proved a key to our merger success. If your program hasn't already done so, articulate learning outcomes your

¹⁴ *Going meta* is our term for strategies that prompt visitors in metacognitive reflective practices.

program forwards. If already have such goals, review them to confirm their alignment with your intuitional umbrella, including your HEI's central mission (Schendel & Macauley, 2012) and with your latest institutional accreditation report. In addition, consult students from across identities to see what outcomes they desire from your program. Ensure all staff can articulate program outcomes, because if they can't, they won't be working toward them intentionally.

2. Evaluate to prove strategically; assess to *improve* liberally.

Of course, the Studio still participates in IPEDS and other program evaluation because we want to understand our programs' return on investment and understand our contributions to student success. But we remain genuinely curious about our pedagogies and practices. For each proof-based evaluation, we recommend pursuing at least one inquiry-based assessment to improve. Inquiry-based assessments allow us to answer, for ourselves, for our campuses, and for accreditors, nuanced questions about the connections between practices and outcomes and about how academic success programs enrich student learning beyond the classroom.

3. Incrementally build a cumulative assessment portfolio¹⁵ around outcomes.

- a. Identify gaps, problems, wishes, not as program critiques but as practitioner curiosities.
- b. Brainstorm a list of inquiry questions tied first to desired outcomes and then to noted gaps.
- c. Choose one do-able question; then choose a do-able method to match.
- d. Create an assessment cycle: gap-innovate-assess-innovate. Always close the loop; that is, end with action (Walvoord, 2010, p. 4). Trying new practices creates a lot of energy around assessment.

¹⁵ For more on bite-sized approaches, see especially Walvoord (2010).

4. Collaborate without and within.

Align with external stakeholders to facilitate collaborative assessment projects (Lerner, 2003; Schendel & Macauley, 2012). The inquiry assessment project emerged in collaboration with the Journalism department and resulted in long-term partnerships and deep engagement with forwarding outcomes. All assessment projects summarized in this chapter included program staff from all roles in analyzing data and brainstorming improvements. Undergraduate tutors took a prominent role in the intellectual work of assessment. When tutors are equitably rewarded, involvement is a professional development opportunity that directly impacts their learning (Hughes et al., 2010). Staff involved with assessment became zestfully engaged in forwarding our outcomes and in innovating new practices, and several wrote interchapters for this volume.

5. Don't overthink assessment.

Assessment may or may not include research, but it always includes noticing. For instance, the Studio's inquiry assessment project began with Brian Bowe and me simply reflectively spitballing how to fix the gaps we noticed. Practitioners reflecting together can provide much valuable assessment data and lead to exciting innovations. A question as simple as "How could we improve X?" will generate collective engagement in improving. Each term, Hacherl Studio practitioners meet individually with a mentor to self-assess practice strengths (based on transcript evidence) and set specific goals. Leaders, including student coordinators, review these self-assessments to gain a composite view of strengths and goals for our community of practice. Just this do-able self-assessment approach leads to generating and swapping many strategic practices.

6. Communicate findings broadly.

Yes, our stakeholders are interested in evaluations to prove. But, surprisingly, most stakeholders are also interested in the learning we demonstrate and in the improvements we're trying. Nobody, not accreditors, administrators, teachers, researchers, or students, has learning entirely figured out—but we'd all like to know more. Academic support program leaders may unfairly assume stakeholders care more about the bottom line than they do about learning, yet recall our Journalism Department's transformational response to the Studio's inquiry project. In general, we find our campus community mostly celebrates when we share what is working and usually partners in improving when we share what isn't.

7. Exploit our edge.

In foregrounding inquiry-based assessments, I'm reminded yet again of our potent edge: with our direct window on student learning, who better to connect pedagogy to learning? While evaluation plays an essential part of any academic program's accountability mandate, I worry that we're exhausting our scholarly energies on defensive evaluations seeking elusive affirmations of yesteryear's lore-bound practices. Doing so squanders our potential as key drivers of pedagogical innovation. As primarily one-to-one, non-graded teaching environments, we are non-threatening enough to connect with students' authentic experiences, and with little administrative and curricular overhead, we are nimble enough to lead innovation. More so than campuses and departments, we can rapidly pilot new pedagogies, and we can ask constituents of all identities for continuous feedback on what and how they are learning, both in our programs and across the curriculum. Academic support programs inhabit a powerful place from which to observe learners and learning processes, try new

approaches, pilot equity-based practices, and inform constituencies about which approaches yield the most learning for students across identities. What could possibly add more value?

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Shareen Grogan (Writing and Public Speaking Center Director, University of Montana; former President, International Writing Centers Association) for her insightful feedback on an early draft.

References

- Adler-Kassner, L., & O'Neill, P. (2010). *Reframing writing assessment to improve teaching and learning*. Utah State University Press.
- Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., & Norman, M. K. (2010). How do students become self-directed learners? In *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching* (pp. 188–216). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses* (1 edition). University of Chicago Press.
- Bowe, B. J., Kjesrud, R., & Hemsley, P. (2020). Improving inquiry questions to foster critical thinking and reflective practice in a journalism capstone. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695820906359>
- Bowles-Terry, M. (2012). Library instruction and academic success: A mixed-methods assessment of a library instruction program. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 7(1), 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.18438/B8PS4D>
- Buck, R. R. (1994). *The effects on writing and revision of two different feedback methods: Teachers' written feedback and writing conference feedback* [Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia]. <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0078074>
- Connaway, L. S., Harvey, W., Kitzie, V., & Mikitish, S. (2017). *Academic library impact: Improving practice and essential areas to research* (Vol. 1). Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/publications/whitepapers/academiclib.pdf>
- Cox, B., & Jantti, M. (2012). Discovering the impact of library use and student performance. *EDUCAUSE Review Online*.

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2012/7/discovering-the-impact-of-library-use-and-student-performance>

Crowther, P. (2013). Understanding the signature pedagogy of the design studio and the opportunities for its technological enhancement. *Journal of Learning Design*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.5204/jld.v6i3.155>

Dugan, R. E., & Hernon, P. (2002). Outcomes assessment: Not synonymous with inputs and outputs. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 28(6), 376–380. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0099-1333\(02\)00339-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0099-1333(02)00339-7)

Efklides, A. (2011). Interactions of metacognition with motivation and affect in self-regulated learning: The MASRL model. *Educational Psychologist*, 46(1), 6–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2011.538645>

Farkas, G. (2011). Review of *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses* by R. Arum & J. Roksa. *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(3), 1000–1002. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663160>

Frye, R. (n.d.). Assessment and outcomes. In *Teaching Handbook*. Western Washington University. Retrieved July 28, 2020, from https://www.wvu.edu/teachinghandbook/resources_support/assessment_outcomes.shtml#undefined

Gilchrist, D., & Oakleaf, M. J. (2012). *An essential partner: The librarian's role in student learning assessment* (Occasional Paper #14). University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OccasionalPaper14.pdf>

Gladstein, J., & Fralix, B. (2017). *National census of writing*.

<http://writingcensus.swarthmore.edu/>

Gofine, M. (2012). How are we doing? A review of assessments within writing centers.

The Writing Center Journal, 32(1), 39–49.

Grillo, M. C., & Leist, C. W. (2013). Academic support as a predictor of retention to

graduation: New insights on the role of tutoring, learning assistance, and

supplemental instruction. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research,*

Theory & Practice. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.15.3.e>

Hathcock, A. (2015). White librarianship in blackface: Diversity initiatives in LIS. *In the*

Library with the Lead Pipe. <http://inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis->

[diversity/](http://inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/)

Hernon, P., & Dugan, R. E. (2001). *Action plan for outcomes assessment in your*

library. ALA Editions.

Hughes, B., Gillespie, P., & Kail, H. (2010). What they take with them: Findings from

the peer writing tutor alumni research project. *The Writing Center Journal*,

30(2), 12–46.

Jones, C. (2001). The relationship between writing centers and improvement in writing

ability: An assessment of the literature. *Education*, 122(1), 3.

Kidwell, E. A. (2019, December). *Academic library building design: Resources for*

planning: user studies & precedents.

<https://acrl.libguides.com/c.php?g=459032&p=3138014>

Kuh, G. D., & Gonyea, R. M. (2015). The role of the academic library in promoting

student engagement in learning. *College & Research Libraries*, 76(3), 359–3845.

<https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.3.359>

- Kuh, G. D., Ikenberry, S. O., Jankowski, N. A., Cain, T. R., Ewell, Hutchings, P., & Kinzie, J. (2015). *Using evidence of student learning to improve higher education* (1 edition). Jossey-Bass.
- Ladouceur, M., Rideout, E., Black, M., Crooks, D., O'Mara, L., & Schmuck, M. (2004). Development of an instrument to assess individual student performance in small group tutorials. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 43(10), 447–455.
- Lerner, N. (2001). Choosing beans wisely. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 26(1), 1–5.
- Lerner, N. (2003). Writing center assessment: Searching for the “proof” of our effectiveness. In M. A. Pemberton & J. Kinkead (Eds.), *The center will hold: Critical perspectives on writing center scholarship* (pp. 58–73). University Press of Colorado. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt46nxnq.7>
- Long, J. G. (2012). State of the studio: Revisiting the potential of studio pedagogy in U.S.-based planning programs. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 32(4), 431–448. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X12457685>
- Mackiewicz, J., & Thompson, I. (2013). Motivational scaffolding, politeness, and writing center tutoring. *The Writing Center Journal*, 33(1), 38–73.
- Malenfant, K. J., & Brown, K. (2017). *Creating sustainable assessment through collaboration: A national program reveals effective practices*. (Occasional Paper #31). University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED590515>
- McConnell, K. D., Horan, E. M., Zimmerman, B., & Rhodes, T. L. (2019). *We have a rubric for that: The value approach to assessment*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2020). *A new decade for assessment: Embedding equity into assessment praxis* (Occasional Paper #42). University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). <https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/A-New-Decade-for-Assessment.pdf>

Nadir, T., & Scheurer, E. (2018). Research and writing in the discipline: A model for faculty-librarian collaboration. In M. Britto & K. Kinsley (Eds.), *Academic libraries and the academy: Strategies and approaches to demonstrate your value, impact, and return on investment* (Vol. 1, pp. 75–99). Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2020, April). *The condition of education: Undergraduate retention and graduation rates*.
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_ctr.asp

Németh, J., & Long, J. G. (2012). Assessing learning outcomes in U.S. planning studio courses. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 32(4), 476–490.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X12453740>

Nusche, D. (2008). Assessment of learning outcomes in higher education: A comparative review of selected practices. In *OECD Publishing (NJ1)* (OECD Education Working Papers No. 15). OECD Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.1787/244257272573>

Oakleaf, M. J. (2010). *The value of academic libraries: A comprehensive research review and report*. Association of College and Research Libraries, American Library Association.

Oakleaf, M. J. (2012). *Academic library value: The impact starter kit*. Dellas Graphics.

- Oakleaf, M. J., & Kyrillidou, M. (2016). Revisiting the academic library value research agenda: An opportunity to shape the future. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 42(6), 757–764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.10.005>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013). *Assessment of higher education learning outcomes feasibility study report: Data analysis and national experiences* (Volume 2; p. 194). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/AHELOFSReportVolume2.pdf>
- Pal, R., Kar, S., Akhtar Zaman, F., Kumar Jha, D., & Pal, S. (2012). Assessment of impact of small group teaching among students in community medicine. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, 37(3), 170–173. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0970-0218.99920>
- Pleasant, S., Niiler, L., & Jagannathan, K. (2016). “By turns pleased and confounded”: A report on one writing center’s RAD assessments. *The Writing Center Journal*, 35(3), 105–140.
- Purdue Writing Lab. (n.d.). *Writing centers research project survey*. Purdue Writing Lab. Retrieved December 9, 2020, from <https://bit.ly/34EDoo7>
- Rhodes, T. L. (2010). *Assessing outcomes and improving achievement: Tips and tools for using rubrics*. Association of American Colleges & Universities. <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/publications/assessing-outcomes-and-improving-achievement-tips-and-tools-using>
- Schendel, E., & Macauley, W. J. (2012). *Building writing center assessments that matter*. Utah State University Press.

- Schmidt, K. M., & Alexander, J. E. (2012). The empirical development of an instrument to measure writerly self-efficacy in writing centers. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 5(1). <http://journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=62>
- Schön, D. A. (1985). *The design studio: An exploration of its traditions and potentials*. RIBA Publications for RIBA Building Industry Trust; Exclusive distributor, ISBS.
- Silva, P. A., Polo, B. J., & Crosby, M. E. (2017). Adapting the studio based learning methodology to computer science education. In S. B. Fee, A. M. Holland-Minkley, & T. E. Lombardi (Eds.), *New directions for computing education: Embedding computing across disciplines* (pp. 119–142). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54226-3_8
- Slee, H., & Winningham, E. (2019). *How to work in a group*. Western Washington University. <https://bit.ly/3nIK8Bv>
- Sobel, K., & Sugimoto, C. R. (2012). Assessment of learning during library instruction: Practices, prevalence, and preparation. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 38(4), 191–204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2012.04.004>
- Soria, K. M., Fransen, J., & Nackerud, S. (2013). Library use and undergraduate student outcomes: New evidence for students' retention and academic success. *Portal*, 13(2), 147–164. <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2013.0010>
- Stone, G., & Ramsden, B. (2013). Library impact data project: Looking for the link between library usage and student attainment. *College & Research Libraries*, 74(6), 546–559. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl12-406>
- Stone, G., Ramsden, B., & Pattern, D. (2011). Looking for the link between library usage and student attainment. *Ariadne*, 67. <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue/67/stone-et-al/>

- Swanwick, T. (Ed.). (2010). *Understanding medical education: Evidence, theory, and practice* (1st ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Thalman, H., Davis, H., & Vaughn, A. (2016). "I hate group projects": Strategies for increasing the love. https://cedar.wvu.edu/library_rwslegacy/5/
- Thompson, I. (2006). Writing center assessment: Why and a little how. *The Writing Center Journal*, 26(1), 33–61.
- Walvoord, B. E. (2010). *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments, and general education*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Western Washington University Office of Institutional Effectiveness. (2019a). *Key performance dashboard for Western Washington University*. Tableau Software. <https://tabsoft.co/35x0XHU>
- Western Washington University Office of Institutional Effectiveness. (2019b). *WELS undergraduate exit survey 2018-19*. Tableau Software. <https://tabsoft.co/3mOE2yA>
- Wurtz, K. A. (2015). Impact of learning assistance center utilization on success. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 38(3), 2–10.
- Yook, E. L. (2013). The effect of communication centers on college student retention: An argument: *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.14.3.d>
- Young, B. R., & Fritzsche, B. A. (2002). Writing center users procrastinate less: The relationship between individual differences in procrastination, peer feedback, and student writing success. *The Writing Center Journal*, 23(1), 45–58.

Appendix A

Evaluation and Assessment Resources for HEIs

Standardized Tests¹⁶:

CLA+: Verified internationally by the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (2013), the [College Learning Assessment](#) is meant to aggregate outcomes across institutions. The test measures critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills¹⁷.

HEIghten Outcomes Assessment Suite: Validated by the Educational Testing Service, this suite measures Civic Competency & Engagement, Critical Thinking, Intercultural Competency & Diversity, Quantitative Literacy, and Written Communication.

National Support for Assessment:

NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement): Also focused on building a national aggregate, NSSE is a user survey designed to elicit student perceptions about learning and engagement. NSSE tracks trends in high impact practices and investigates the relationship between engagement and persistence. Many institutions that participate in NSSE use it as a model for local surveys. For instance, Western Washington University employs the Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) to assess (and improve) all aspects of learning and campus life¹⁸.

LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise): In an initiative that began in 2005, the [Association of American Colleges & Universities](#) (AACU) offered a set of national learning outcomes that still prevails. To meet the LEAP challenge, AACU offers a number of assessment publications, including VALUE

¹⁶ Standardized tests are norm-referenced and are meant to be highly objective.

¹⁷ *Academically Adrift* (2011) authors, Arum and Roksa, used the CLA administered to incoming freshmen and to rising juniors, allowing a growth comparison pre-/post-GERs. All the usual standardized assessment validity and reliability critiques have been leveled at CLA (Adler-Kassner & O'Neill, 2010; Farkas, 2011; Schendel & Macauley, 2012).

¹⁸ "The purpose of the WELS is fourfold: 1) To assess student needs based upon their self-reported characteristics, perceptions, and concerns; 2) To provide data that can be used to assess academic and co-curricular programs; 3) To provide baseline entry data that can be used as statistical controls in analyses that offset the inability to conduct randomized studies; and 4) To maintain an ongoing record of student knowledge acquisition, ability levels, and other general education outcomes to address concerns of accountability and accreditation. Unlike national studies, the WELS survey instrument can be tailored to fit Western's needs, including, if needed, a replication of national survey questions to make direct comparisons with other institutions" (Western Washington University Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2019b).

([Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education](#)) rubrics that institutions can use in conducting local assessments of the LEAP learning outcomes (McConnell et al., 2019; Rhodes, 2010).

[NILOA \(National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment\)](#):

Founded by George Kuh in 2008, NILOA encourages institutions in fostering a culture of intellectually engaged inquiry and helps institutions design authentic assessments. NILOA offers models, a corpus of vetted assignments, support for the politics of assessment, and strategies for engaging faculty and staff across silos. Recently, NILOA released guidance on nuancing assessment to make it equitable for underserved students: “Equitable assessment should work to ensure that learning outcomes, and how we assess those outcomes, are done in ways which do not privilege certain students over others” (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020, p. 14).

Appendix B

Hacherl Studio Outcomes, Goals, and Practices

Western Libraries' Teaching and Learning Division Outcomes¹⁹

- **Evaluate and challenge** traditional and oppressive norms and practices through the engagement of academic literacies
- Use and **value inquiry** for gaining and sharing knowledge
- **Collaborate** as respectful, productive, and ethical members of a diverse and inclusive intellectual
- Demonstrate a sense of **agency** for managing one's own learning

Hacherl Studio Outcomes Assessment			
Out-come	Goals	Practices	Assessment Evidence
EVALUATE & CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize privilege • Normalize talking about anti-oppression • Identify and use new anti-oppressive practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement <i>ouch-oops</i> strategy in response to microaggressions • Implement ongoing staff conversation about anti-oppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some staff use <i>ouch-oops</i> strategy • Staff need more strategies/practice • Have not yet begun to coach visitors in this outcome
INQUIRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine and narrow inquiry questions • Choose effective search terms • Read strategically and deeply • Evaluate, analyze, and connect information • Present reasoned perspectives in effective communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistically support creative, engaged inquiry • Equip visitors with literacies that support lifelong learning • Treat research, reading, and writing as a unified, iterative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors demonstrate improved inquiry questions and thesis statements after implementing workshop strategies

¹⁹ From Western Libraries' internal document "TLD's Purpose Statement & Learning Outcomes, August 2019."

COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand inquiry and knowledge making as social • Work effectively together in a supportive learning process • Manage the collaborative process in individual and group projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design space and affordances inviting to groups and individuals • Co-consult to maximize staff expertise • Honor the expertise of students by connecting them with others engaged in learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted 9000 collaborative groups • Project groups report three main obstacles to effective work: logistics, relationships, connections • Staff facilitate classmate groups by connecting students who are working alone
AGENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively manage learning environment • Engage a variety of process strategies for all literacies • Reflect metacognitively on learning processes and choose effective adjustments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorize students to configure space and affordances • Equip students to manage literacy processes • Scaffold strategies using <i>I do</i>, <i>We do</i>, <i>You do</i> pedagogy • Attend to long-term goals by facilitating the transfer of previous conceptual and processual learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant percentage of sessions address multiple literacies • Consultants scaffold literacy process strategies using <i>I do</i>, <i>You do</i> (need more work on <i>We do</i>) • Follow ups with visitors working on <i>You do</i> strategies show evidence of new conceptual understanding and independent problem-solving

Appendix C

Hacherl Studio Assessment Project Exemplar

Project	Improving Practices for Inquiry and Agency			
Purpose	Western Washington University's assessment cycle assesses programs one year and implements improvements the next. This year's focus is improving. Based on findings from two assessment projects on Inquiry and Agency, identify and implement improvements to workshop and consulting practices.			
Main Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the Inquiry and Agency projects (data analysis underway). 2. Identify practices associated with gain and gaps associated with no gain. 3. Identify a body of secondary research/theory to inform improvements. 4. Report and discuss findings with practitioners; develop new staff education materials with new practices for coaching visitors. 			
Success Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff articulate evidence-based impacts of Studio sessions and workshops on inquiry and agency. • Implement new staff education units, one on improving practices for agency and one on improving practices for inquiry. • Collect and analyze session transcripts after new units implemented. 			
Lead	Director of Writing, Studio			
Roles	[Note: both teams comprised professionals and students]			
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Studio staff • All Studio and workshop users • Faculty who teach student users • Western Libraries, TLD, Learning Commons, University, and Donors 			
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not finish assessment data analysis in time to identify improvements. • Permanent staff lack capacity, creating a long delay between data collection and analysis; thus, improvements may be dated. • Limited resources for Student Research Coordinator limits capacity. 			
Resources	(Links to research/theory on inquiry and agency omitted)			
Duration	Plan improvements Summer 20xx; Implement improvements Fall 20xx			
Task	Start	Finish	Who?	Progress Notes